Quick Update from the GE Task Force

The General Education Task Force has been working hard to review our program and make some recommendations. We have met with the Strategic Planning group and President Robbins as well as other stakeholders, including current students, advisors, administrators, and alumni. We have been meeting every two weeks and will work through the summer months to have a report for the Vice Provost by the beginning of August. If you have any ideas or comments you wish to share that are relevant to the committee’s charge, please email one of the chairs: Cindy Rankin or Jim Baygents.

Want to help? As you know, I have been collecting GE syllabi for several semesters now. This past spring, I requested your syllabi at the beginning of the semester, but because of my work on other projects, I did not send out reminders to those who did not respond. One of those projects is developing a generic syllabus template that can collect all of the pertinent information for a class. Students and accreditors alike have been asking for this for a long time. Therefore, we have developed an experimental template. I have put it into a survey format for now and am asking for volunteers to fill it out. It should not involve any thing more than copying and pasting from your existing syllabus onto the template. The purpose of that template is to have something that can compares apples to apples! Each of you have such a personalized syllabus; this can make it hard for anyone to make comparisons between classes and sections of the same class.

Filling out the survey is on a strictly volunteer basis! But if you can find it in the kindness of your heart to fill one out for a course, I will be greatly indebted to you. I am throwing this template out there to see how it works.

Thank you ahead of time to anyone who fills it out! Just use this link to the survey.

https://w.taskstream.com/SurveyLink/ppc5crc3ycqcyo/4ca8aa9d

UA Learning Initiative

The UA Learning Initiative is an approved Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Quality Initiative designed to enhance and support student learning through integrated programs for both faculty and students. These initiatives are focused on leading faculty and students through discussion and activities focused on understanding and using effective strategies that can improve student learning and enhance retention of learned content and concepts.

Effective Strategies include: active involvement of students within the classroom setting; low-stakes testing throughout the semester and better use of technology within the classroom.

The faculty and the students work separately as well as together to increase student learning.

For more information and get involved go to: http://academicaffairs.arizona.edu/uali
Steward Observatory was officially established in 1918 through the foresight and perseverance of its first director, Andrew Ellicott Douglass. Douglass had come to Arizona in 1894 under the sponsorship of Percival Lowell. He was tasked to establish an astronomical observatory which became Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff. After he joined the University of Arizona faculty in 1906, Douglas sought to build an observatory in southern Arizona. Steward Observatory was made possible by the generous bequest made in 1916 by Mrs. Lavinia Steward in memory of her late husband, Henry B. Steward. The Steward gift was used to build an observatory on an isolated tract of university land—a former ostrich farm. Its construction, delayed by World War I, was finally dedicated in 1923. The 36" diameter Newtonian telescope was the first astronomical telescope to have been built using All-American made products.

By 1963, however, its once solitary setting—ideal for stargazing—had been encroached upon by an expanding Tucson, and the observatory's original telescope was removed from the dome and relocated to a darker mountain site on Kitt Peak. A smaller 21" Cassegrain telescope was installed in its place for student use. The original dome, a stately structure covered with cream colored tile, is a campus landmark and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

**Are You Telling Stories in the Classroom?**

I’m not speaking of lying or delivering fake news; I’m talking about an actual story. Consider this: A story communicates something, by definition, and can entertain, amuse, delight, divert, provoke, offend, disturb, disappoint, but in all, a story can instruct. There’s a lot of background to storytelling—the what and how to use in lecture, but let’s first discuss the why.

There are five parts to a story: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution. This is all fine and good, but a story delivered in the classroom, whether one of these single parts or the sum thereof, can be the spark to help students remember and recall information in a new way, and enable them to grasp the material. Stories can make a subject accessible and even interesting (even the required course everyone loves to hate). They can provide value, turn something abstract or obscure into something concrete. They can transport something dull into something vibrant and stimulating. People live in stories, whether in books, newspapers, movies, podcasts... Netflix binge-watching, anyone? We aren’t just reading or watching or listening to people talk or observing colorful images dance across the screen, we are absorbing a story as it unfolds. Humans want to be intrigued, reeled in, tightly wound with no place to go but further in. We get to consume, hear a tale unravel. We get to learn something.

I like to avoid phrases like “meaning-making,” but that’s what a story can do for students—it allows them to listen, learn, and remember. It doesn’t have to be all the material or even just one part, it can be some tangential story about what happened to you in the line at the grocery store last week or what you thought of the new Star Wars movie or that weird thing that happened to you in your sophomore year of college. Just draw the association, make it connect. If you’re still not convinced, read these five short and succinct reasons why you should incorporate storytelling in your classroom.

1) Stories make a subject relatable and accessible to students. They can pave the way, introduce a concept, invite in, and most importantly, engage. (Your students may have their own stories to share, too.)

2) Stories can pique interest, or demonstrate relevance, in a subject that students usually dislike, or worse, find mind-numbing. A story can also spike interest on the first day of class, setting the tone, or it can liven up the slump that hits in the middle of the semester.

3) Stories build meaning-making (there’s that word again), helping students to recall the information later. How many times have you recalled some bit of information because it was delivered through the device of a story?

4) Stories forge, or repave, paths to material that students thought they already knew, making way for new perspectives, connections, and experiences to develop through someone else’s story.

5) Stories make a subject approachable. This is different than making a subject accessible, in that you can gingerly erect a bridge across a formerly dark abyss of the unknown, guiding your students into new territory, or a particular idea, or a complicated issue. A storyteller in the classroom is like the subject-whisperer to the weary student.

So how do you tell a story? How do you engage your students in material they need to learn in your course via relevance, perspective shifting/building, remembering? Did you know you are probably already telling stories? This blog is meant to help you make conscious what you are already doing subconsciously, and therefore have greater control over how you use stories to foster student learning. Give your students the opportunity to connect to the material in a logical way, an emotional way, through someone else’s lens, as you deliver your next lecture—or, in other words, the next time you spin a tale.

The posting above is by Melanie Green and it was posted on January 10, 2018 on the Berkeley Center for Teaching & Learning. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License 2013 (may be reproduced with credit for non-commercial purposes. Michael O’Hare’s blog: http://www.samefacts.com/
### May 14–25, 2018

**Introduction to Teaching Online**  
Registration has reached the quota; to be placed on the waitlist email [Garry Forger](mailto:Garry.Forger@oia.edu).  
In this 14-day mini-course, participants will experience taking an online course while learning about methods, tools, and best practices for teaching hybrid and fully online courses.

### May 29–June 2, 2018

**Exploring VoiceThread**  
[Register](https://example.com/register)  
Participants in this five-day, fully online, mini-course will examine, play with, discuss and conceptualize uses of VoiceThread for instruction, storytelling, scenario-based learning, interactive content, community building, assessment and more. A computer or mobile device with a camera and microphone is required.

### June 11–29, 2018

**Collaborative Learning**  
[Register](https://example.com/register)  
*Online with in-person meetings Thursdays, June 14, 21, & 28 from 1–3 pm*  
In this three-week, hybrid mini-course, participants will learn about, plan, and practice using evidence-based, active and collaborative learning strategies for teaching both undergraduate and graduate courses.

### July 23–August 6, 2018

**Course Development**  
[Register](https://example.com/register)  
This 14-day online mini-course introduces tools and best practices for effective course design, applicable both to creating new courses and revising existing ones, be it from in-person to online formats, or from a 16-week schedule to an accelerated one.

### August 6–10, 2018

**Re–Imagining Slides**  
[Register](https://example.com/register)  
This five-day mini-course will invite participants to dust off those text heavy, bullet-point-laden lecture slides and re–imagine the power and purpose of what is projected on a screen.

### August 13–17, 2018

**Course-Level Assessment**  
[Register](https://example.com/register)  
This five-day online mini-course introduces assessment strategies and techniques that can be implemented at the course level to measure student learning, course design, and teaching practices.

### August 13–17, 2018

**Effective Online Discussions**  
[Register](https://example.com/register)  
This five-day mini-course introduces strategies for designing and facilitating effective online discussions that expand student exposure to curriculum, deepen learning, and increase student engagement.

### August 13–17, 2018

**Teaching a Large Online Course**  
[Register](https://example.com/register)  
This five-day mini-course introduces instructional strategies and techniques for teaching large fully online courses.